CLAIMS

1. An article of manufacture in computer readable form comprising computer readable program code means embodied therein for performing in a computer system a method for providing an online collaborative environment for at least one user, said computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect the method comprising the steps of:

a) creating an instance of an online meeting, the instance including phases, and an agenda of the meeting's phases;

b) receiving input from at least one user;

c) depicting said input in a graphical representation including a set of objects; and

d) forwarding said representation to said at least one user.

2. An article according to claim 1, further comprising means for:

Determining if all meeting phases have been completed;

If all meeting phases have been completed, terminating the meeting instance;

If all meeting phases have not been completed, repeating steps a) - d) until all phases specified in said agenda are completed.

3. An article according to claim 2, wherein the step of depicting includes an indication of said at least one user's activity, based on a comparison of said activity with a criterion.

4. An article according to claim 1, wherein said user input is selected from the group comprising a query, a response, a text comment, and a task specification; and wherein said representation includes a handle to said input, which can later be used to retrieve said input.

5. An article according to claim 1, including means for providing a dynamic determination of the next active phase based on results or analysis of participation of previous phase(s).

6. An article according to claim 1, wherein said at least one user is assigned a role and the type of input and associated phase in which input can be given is restricted by the role.

7. An article according to claim 1, wherein the active phase is emphasized in a visual representation of the meeting.

8. An article according to claim 1, of providing a transition from one phase to an

earlier phase in said agenda; and

providing at least one of a graphic representation of one or more interactions of a given loop; and

means for enabling said at least one user to review an earlier iteration of said loop.

9. An article according to claim 1, wherein said representation includes both graphic and text section and where the content of said text section is automatically adjusted to match user selection of the point of focus in the graphic section.

10. An article according to claim 9, including showing in said graphic section said at least one user's visiting a previous or future phase.

11. An article according to claim 9, including means for setting status of objects in said graphic representation to one or more of:

Open/Locked;

New Information/Seen;

Glitter/No Glitter.

12. A system for providing an instance of an online collaborative meeting for at least one user, the system comprising:

a) a database that provides persistent access to data;

b) a server that enables the creation of an instance of an agenda driven meeting and that receives all meeting inputs, logs said inputs in said database, updates a representation of said instance, and forwards the representation to said at least one user; and

c) at least one client enabling said at least one user to enter and input and receive said representation.

13. A system according to claim 12, wherein the server is a web-portal and said receiving and forwarding is performed using the HTTP protocol.

14. A system according to claim 13, further comprising creating an archive version of the completed meeting instance.

15. A system according to claim 12, further comprising means for:

Said at least one user retrieving said meeting archive; and

Said at least one user replaying said meeting instance, said replay including at least one of the instances' phases.

16. A method for providing in a computer system an online collaborative environment for at least one user, comprising the steps of:

a) creating an instance of an online meeting, the instance including phases, and an agenda of the meeting's phases;

b) receiving input from at least one user;

c) depicting said input in a graphical representation including a set of objects; and

d) forwarding said representation to said at least one user.

17. A method according to claim 16, further comprising steps of:

Determining if all meeting phases have been completed;

If all meeting phases have been completed, terminating the meeting instance;

If all meeting phases have not been completed, repeating steps a) - d) until all phases specified in said agenda are completed.

18. A method according to claim 17, wherein the step of depicting includes an indication of said at least one user's activity, based on a comparison of said activity with a criterion.

19. A method according to claim 16, wherein said user input is selected from the group comprising a query, a response, and a task specification; and wherein said representation includes a handle to this input, which can later be used to retrieve said input.

20. A method according to claim 16, of providing a dynamic determination of the next active phase based on results or analysis of participation of previous phase(s).

21. A method according to claim 16, wherein said at least one user is assigned a role and the type of input and associated phase in which input can be given is restricted by the role.

22. A method according to claim 16, wherein the active phase is emphasized in a visual representation of the meeting.

23. A method according to claim 16, of providing a transition from one phase to an earlier phase in said agenda; and

providing at least one of a graphic representation of one or more interactions of a given loop; and

means for enabling said at least one user to review an earlier iteration of said loop.

24. A method according to claim 16, wherein said representation includes both

graphic and text section and where the content of said text section is automatically adjusted to match user selection of the point of focus in the graphic section.

25. A method according to claim 24, including showing in said graphic section said at least one user's visiting a previous or future phase.

26. A method according to claim 24, including means for setting status of objects in said graphic representation to one or more of:

Open/Locked;

New Information/Seen;

Glitter/No Glitter.

27. A method enabling a service organization to give a customer organization the ability to use Agenda-Driven Meetings, the method consisting of the following steps:

Ensuring the customer organization has the hardware and software required to host the Agenda-Driven Meeting service, including a database;

Determining meeting types that are useful for said customer organization;

Adding templates for said meeting types to said database.

28. A system according to claim 27, further consisting of the service organization providing upgrades, or new templates useful to said customer.

29. A method according to claim 28, wherein said upgrades and additions are provided by said service organization to said customer organization periodically.

30. An article according to claim 1, including means for enabling a given user to participate in a given instance of an online meeting either synchronously or asynchronously.